

Early Childhood Education Family Workshop

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Sibling relationships in families with Deaf children



California School for the Deaf

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The Advantages of having a Deaf sibling. Siblings are more...

- ✦ Empathetic
- ✦ Bilingual
- ✦ Resilient
- ✦ Knowledgeable
- ✦ Accepting of others with differences
- ✦ Altruistic

Typical Sibling Experiences

- Competition
- Favoritism
- Fairness
- Sharing
- Protective
- Temperaments

Typical Deaf & Hearing Sibling Experiences

- Need to be perfect – not cause problems
- Can't express feelings – love/hate relationship
- Having an “assigned” parent
- Issues are minimized
- Isolated – afraid to have friends over
- High expectations – to look out for their sibling
- Social Justice police

Ensure Language Access

- ✦ Common for one person to be the “interpreter” & the “assigned parent” to the Deaf child
- ✦ Have times where the entire family communicates in sign
- ✦ Set aside time to have 1:1 spoken conversations with your hearing child.
- ✦ Set aside time to have 1:1 signed conversations with your Deaf child.
- ✦ Provide opportunities to meet similar siblings

Encourage sibling bonding



- ✦ Find activities they can do together
- ✦ Assign them a shared chore

Have fun together as a family

- ✦ Don't over focus on the challenges
- ✦ Have regular outings together
- ✦ Watch a show together – “Switched at Birth”, “Atypical” – then discuss

Being Fair

- Is a good goal but impossible
- Avoid comparisons. Each child is unique!
- Celebrate progress and milestones of all your children
- Are you more or less permissive with your hearing or Deaf children?